

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:NHOWELL
APPROVED BY NEA:WCRAWFORD
NEA - MR DRAPER
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TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN AMBASSADOR ON FIGHTING IN LEBANON

REF: DAMASCUS 3769

1. SYRIAN AMBASSADOR KABBANI CALLED AT HIS REQUEST ON ACTING
ASSISTANT SECRETARY CRAWFORD ON JULY 3. KABBANI EXPLAINED
HE WAS SEEKING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM DAMASCUS CLARIFICATION
OF INFORMATION UNDERSECRETARY NEWSOM HAD CONVEYED TO
KABBANI RE SITUATION IN LEBANON JULY 1. KABBANI SAID

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DAMASCUS HAD GAINED IMPRESSION U.S. WAS ACTING ON REQUEST
FROM SARKIS IN URGING RESTRAINT UPON SYRIANS. HE SAID IM-
PRESSION ALSO HAD BEEN GAINED THAT U.S., ON BASIS TALKS
WITH SARKIS, HELD SYRIAN ADF RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVOCATIONS
WHICH LED TO FIGHTING, RATHER THAN CHRISTIAN MILITIAS.
(FYI: KABBANI'S INSTRUCTIONS MAY HAVE BEEN SLIGHTLY STALE
SINCE IN CORRIDOR CONVERSATION WITH COUNTRY OFFICER HOWELL,

HE DID NOT KNOW OF CHARGE'S MEETING WITH KHADDAM REPORTED
REFTEL. END FYI.)

2. CRAWFORD ASSURED KABBANI THESE IMPRESSIONS WERE INCORRECT AND EXPLAINED THAT SARKIS HAD SUMMONED AMBASSADOR PARKER TO POINT OUT GRAVITY OF SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND TO SEEK USG ASSISTANCE WITHOUT SPECIFYING THE FORMS SUCH HELP MIGHT TAKE. HE SAID US REALIZED GOL AND SARG HAVE THEIR OWN CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND DID NOT WISH TO GET IN MIDDLE. HOWEVER, UPON REFLECTION AND ON PARKER'S RECOMMENDATION, DEPARTMENT DECIDED TO SEEK COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE OF BOTH SYRIA AND ISRAEL IN BRINGING TRAGIC CLASHES TO AN IMMEDIATE HALT. WITH THE ISRAELIS, WE HAD URGED THAT THEY USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS TO STOP ALL PRESENT AND FUTURE PROVOCATIONS AGAINST SYRIAN FORCES. COUNTRY DIRECTOR DRAPER POINTED OUT THAT OUR CHARGE HAD RESPONDED TO THE SAME INQUIRY FROM FONMIN KHADDAM OVER THE WEEKEND AND WE BELIEVE KHADDAM HAD BEEN SATISFIED WITH THE CLARIFICATION. SARKIS HAD TOLD US THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF THE FIGHTING HAD BEEN A CHAMOUNIST. NEITHER WE NOR SARKIS HAD BLAMED THE SYRIANS.

3. CRAWFORD URGED THE NEED TO LOOK AHEAD NOW AND TO EXERT ALL EFFORTS TOWARD ENDING THE TERRIBLE LOSS OF LIFE ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS. HE ADDED THAT THE USG DID NOT BELIEVE ANYONE, INCLUDING THE SYRIANS, WAS BENEFITTING FROM
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THE PRESENT DESPARATE SITUATION AND IS LOOKING FOR WAYS.

TO RESTORE CALM. HE CONCLUDED THAT SYRIA, WHICH HAS A PREPONDERANCE OF STRENGTH, WAS IN A POSITION TO TAKE THE LEAD IN BRINGING ABOUT A CEASEFIRE.

4. KABBANI AGREED THAT SYRIA IS NOT GAINING FROM THE FIGHTING BUT ARGUED THAT THE USG SHOULD TALK FIRST TO THE ISRAELIS, WHO INFLUENCE THE MILITIAS, AND THE MILITIAS WHO HAD PROVOKED THE FIGHTING. HE ACCUSED THE ISRAELIS OF STIRRING UP TROUBLE BY EGGING ON THEIR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS. DRAPER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WE HAVE REGULARLY BEEN TALKING WITH CHRISTIAN LEADERS, URGING THAT THEY SUPPORT SARKIS AND AVOID PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS. WE HAVE ALSO BEEN CONSULTING CLOSELY WITH SYRIA REGARDING LEBANON FOR TWO YEARS. WE HAD CONSISTENTLY ACKNOWLEDGED THE CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE THE SYRIANS HAD PLAYED IN MAINTAINING SECURITY, DESPITE THE PROVOCATIONS. IT WAS IN THAT SPIRIT THAT WE HAD AGAIN CONSULTED WITH SYRIA THIS WEEKEND TO SHARE OUR CONCERNS.

5. KABBANI POINTED TO THE DIFFICULTY OF THE SYRIAN FORCES

ENDING THE CLASHES UNILATERALLY. KABBANI AGREED THE MAGNITUDE OF THE HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM, BUT DOUBTED THAT THE MILITIAS CARE BECAUSE THEY ARE CARRYING OUT A PLAN THAT BEGAN WITH THE PHALANGE MASSACRE AT IHDIN. KABBANI SAID THE SYRIAN FORCES WERE IN LEBANON TO MAINTAIN ORDER AGAINST ANY ELEMENTS THAT CHALLENGE THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT. THEY HAVE CONFRONTED LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS, AS WELL AS CHRISTIANS, AND WOULD DO SO AGAIN IF NECESSARY. IF,

HOWEVER, THE ADF DID NOT OPPOSE THE PROVOCATIONS AND PLANS OF THE MILITIAS, THEY MIGHT AS WELL WITHDRAW FROM LEBANON.

6. CRAWFORD AGAIN RETURNED TO THE NECESSITY FOR AN EARLY END TO THE BLOODSHED, NOTING USG HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS
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AND EXPRESSING THE HOPE THAT SYRIAN COMMANDERS ON THE SPOT WILL EXERCISE RESTRAINT. HE REPEATED THAT WE WERE IN TOUCH WITH ALL QUARTERS, INCLUDING THE VATICAN, WHICH MIGHT EXERT A CALMING INFLUENCE. KABBANI SOUGHT CONFIRMATION THAT WE HAD APPROACHED ISRAEL AND ASKED IF HE MIGHT INQUIRE AS TO THE NATURE OF SUCH AN APPROACH. CRAWFORD SAID WE HAD CONTACTED THE ISRAELIS IN BOTH WASHINGTON AND ISRAEL TO EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERN AT THE LOSS OF LIFE AND TO USE WHATEVER INFLUENCE THEY MIGHT HAVE ON THE MILITIAS TO CEASE FIGHTING AND AVOID PROVOCATIONS. HE SAID THE ISRAELIS HAD ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF OUR GRAVE CONCERN WITH IMPLICATION THEY WOULD TRY TO HELP.

7. DRAPER INFORMED KABBANI THAT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LEBANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY HAD MET JULY 3 WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER TO CONVEY THE DEEP CONCERN OF THE LEBANESE-AMERICAN COMMUNITY. CHRISTOPHER STRESSED THAT THE USG WANTED A CEASEFIRE ASAP AND URGED THE LEAGUE TO CONTACT LEBANESE CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO PRESS UPON THE; THE NECESSITY FOR AN END TO THE FIGHTING. VANCE

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